

NEWTON, et al., Ser. N. 9/407,531, GAU 2124, Examiner John Q. Davis  
Amendment and Response

complete copy of the claims in "marked up" form showing the deletions and additions is provided on separate pages after this amendment and response.

**CLAIMS IN "CLEAN" FORM**

- 1 1. (Amended) A release control method for providing early deployment releases of a  
2 software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new  
3 features and platforms, the method comprising the steps of:  
4 a. providing an early development branch of the software system that is  
5 designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing  
6 support for new features and platforms;  
7 b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested  
8 software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules  
9 comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new  
10 platforms;  
11 c. committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and  
12 platforms into the early development branch; and  
13 d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development  
14 release containing pre-tested software modules for new features and  
15 platforms.
- 1 2. (Amended) The release control method of claim 1 comprising the additional step  
2 of repeating steps c and d on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of  
3 cycles.
- 1 3. (Amended) The release control method of claim 1 wherein the pre-tested software  
2 module is received at a pre-integration branch that is separate from the early  
3 development branch, and wherein the committing step comprises committing pre-  
4 tested software modules for new features and platforms from a pre-integration  
5 branch into the early development branch.

NEWTON, et al., Sec. 10. 09/407,531, GAU 2124, Examiner John J. Chavis  
Amendment and Response

- C2
- 1 8. (Amended) A system for providing early deployment releases of a software  
2 system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and  
3 platforms, comprising:  
4 a. an early development branch of the software system designated for  
5 incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new  
6 features and platforms;  
7 b. logic for receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-  
8 tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules  
9 comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new  
10 platforms;  
11 c. logic for committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and  
12 platforms into the early development branch;  
13 d. using the early development branch, logic for generating a new early  
14 development release containing pre-tested software modules for new  
15 features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of  
16 cycles; and  
17 e. logic for generating said new early development release containing pre-  
18 tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular  
19 recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles.

- 1 9. (Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the logic for committing comprises  
2 logic for committing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms  
3 from a pre-integration branch into the early development branch.

- C3
- 1 14. (Amended) A product release method for controlling the release of software  
2 system code based on a fixed frequency, the method comprising the steps of:  
3 a. selecting one or more features for inclusion in a new release of the  
4 software system code base, wherein a quantity of features selected will allow a  
5 next scheduled release of the software system code base to be completed at a  
6 required time;  
7 b. testing the quantity of features selected in a plurality of business units;

NEWTON, et al., Ser. No. 09/407,531, GAU 2124, Examiner John A. Chavis  
Amendment and Response

- C 3
- 8 c. providing the quantity of features selected to a pre-integration branch of
  - 9 the software system code base only when testing in the business units is
  - 10 successful;
  - 11 d. testing the quantity of features selected in the pre-integration branch;
  - 12 e. providing the quantity of features selected to a development branch only
  - 13 when testing in the business units is successful and in time to allow the next
  - 14 scheduled release of the software system code base to be completed in the
  - 15 required time.
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- 1 15. (Not Amended) The method of claim 14 comprising the additional steps of:
  - 2 a. completing testing of a modified software system code base in the
  - 3 development branch which contains the quantity of features selected and
  - 4 tested in the pre-integration branch; and
  - 5 b. releasing the modified software system code base at the required time.
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- C 4
- 1 19. (New) A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
  - 2 receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new
  - 3 features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-
  - 4 integration branches;
  - 5 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the
  - 6 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-
  - 7 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and
  - 8 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-
  - 9 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules
  - 10 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to
  - 11 the central pre-integration branches.
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- 1 20. (New) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating,
- 2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing
- 3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of

NEWTON, et al., Se No. 09/407,531, GAU 2124, Examiner John D. Chavis  
Amendment and Response

4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.

1 21. (New) A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or  
3 platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration  
4 branches;  
5 at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of  
6 that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature  
7 individually, and in combination with all other features;  
8 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
9 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
10 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
11 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
12 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
13 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
14 the central pre-integration branches.

1 22. (New) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating,  
2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing  
3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of  
4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.

1 23. (New) A computer-readable medium comprising one or more stored sequences of  
2 instructions for providing release control using early deployment releases of a  
3 software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new  
4 features and platforms, which instructions, when executed by one or more  
5 processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the steps of:  
6 a. providing an early development branch of a software release that is  
7 designated for incorporation of support for new features and platforms;

NEWTON, et al., Se. o. 09/407,531, GAU 2124, Examiner John Chavis  
Amendment and Response

- 8           b.     receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested  
9                 source code modules, wherein each of the pre-tested source code modules  
10                comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new  
11                platforms;  
12           c.     committing the pre-tested source code for new features and platforms into  
13                 the early development branch; and  
14           d.     using the early development branch, generating a new early development  
15                 release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms.

- C4
- 1   24.   (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising  
2           the steps of:  
3           receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new  
4                 features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-  
5                 integration branches;  
6           committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
7                 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
8                 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
9           committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
10                integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
11                have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
12                the central pre-integration branches.

- 1   25.   (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising  
2           the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early  
3           development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and  
4           platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been  
5           committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development  
6           branch.

NEWTON, et al., S. No. 09/407,531, GAU 2124, Examiner John J. Chavis  
Amendment and Response

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1 26. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising  
2 the steps of:  
3 receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or  
4 platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration  
5 branches;  
6 at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of  
7 that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature  
8 individually, and in combination with all other features;  
9 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
10 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
11 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
12 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
13 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
14 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
15 the central pre-integration branches.

1 27. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising  
2 the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early  
3 development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and  
4 platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been  
5 committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development  
6 branch.

1 28. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new  
3 features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-  
4 integration branches;  
5 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
6 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
7 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

NEWTON, et al., Ser. No. 09/407,531, GAU 2124, Examiner John Chavis  
Amendment and Response

8 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
9 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
10 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
11 the central pre-integration branches.

1 29. (New) A system as recited in Claim 28, further comprising the step of generating,  
2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing  
3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of  
4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.

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1 30. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or  
3 platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration  
4 branches;  
5 at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of  
6 that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature  
7 individually, and in combination with all other features;  
8 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
9 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
10 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
11 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
12 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
13 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
14 the central pre-integration branches.

1 31. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the step of generating,  
2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing  
3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of  
4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.